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Library and Harvesters Combat Winter Hunger

MCPL Launches ‘Winter Food Drive’ at Branches to Support Local Need

Greater Kansas City, MO – Today marks the first day of Mid-Continent Public Library’s Winter Food Drive, which it’s launching in partnership with Harvesters—The Community Food Network. The food drive will run from now through February 26 at all MCPL branches, supporting the growing need among Harvesters’ 26-county service area. Donations of unexpired, nonperishable food items as well as household items like soap, deodorant, shampoo, and toilet paper can be dropped off at each of MCPL’s branches during regular hours.

“We know that hunger is something many people in our community struggle with every day, especially during the colder months when utility bills climb,” said Jim Staley, MCPL Community Relations and Planning Director. “As an institution dedicated to supporting our fellow community members, we felt that it was important for the Library to play a role in helping combat this serious issue.”

In fact, according to Harvesters, 63 percent of households served in their network have had to choose between paying for food or utilities, and 45 percent of those served by Harvesters’ network are seniors or children. As these families face the growing issue of food insecurity, they cope in a variety of ways including eating food past its expiration date. Others report buying the cheapest food available—regardless of its nutritional value—and some have even watered down food or drinks to make them last longer.

“We are so grateful to have partners like Mid-Continent Public Library who step up to fight hunger in our community,” said Valerie Nicholson-Watson, President and CEO of Harvesters—The Community Food Network. “They already do so much for us, but to add another food drive at this time of year is critical for the families and seniors we serve.”

MCPL is no stranger to the food drive process with its biannual Food for Fines program that it hosts in the spring and fall, which gives customers the chance to pay off Library fines and fees with food donations that are then given to local pantries, as well as the Kids Café program from Harvesters, which the Library hosts at many of its branches during the summer, providing free lunches to kids. Currently, the Library is hosting this Harvesters meal program at four of its branches during the school year and will continue to do so through May 24. The Library’s next round of Food for Fines will be held this spring.
To learn more about Harvesters initiatives to combat hunger, visit harvesters.org. To learn more about the Library’s programs and services, visit mymGPL.org.

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Access Your World

Mid-Continent Public Library is the largest library system in the Kansas City metropolitan area, operating 31 branches and three Library-To-Go locations and serving more than 800,000 people in Jackson, Clay, and Platte Counties. The Library strives to enrich our citizens and communities through expanding access to innovation, information, ideas, and inspiration. MCPL is a 2014 National Medal for Museum and Library Service winner. Connect with the Library on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

About Harvesters—The Community Food Network

Harvesters is a regional food bank and was Feeding America’s 2011 Food Bank of the Year. Serving a 26-county area of northwestern Missouri and northeastern Kansas, Harvesters provides food and related household products to more than 760 not-for-profit agencies including emergency food pantries, community kitchens, shelters, and others. Agencies in Harvesters’ network provide food assistance to as many as 141,500 different people each month. Harvesters, which was founded in 1979, is a certified member of Feeding America, a nationwide network of more than 200 food banks, serving all 50 states. For more information, visit www.harvesters.org.